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By-Elliott, Jacqueline

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A number of ways to interweave the teaching of culture with the teaching of language skills at all levels are suggested. In considering the manners by which to present selected cultural patterns at the different levels, the article cites three methods by which teaching culture can be incorporated easily into the language teaching activities of teaching songs, greetings, and oral composition and reading. Means of implementing the cultural objective taken from the 1956 Northeast Conference on Language Teaching include the (1) use of authentic materials, (2) discussion of certain key themes or culturally significant words, (3) study of the angle from which the target language people see us, (4) preparation by the students of pertinent questions for guest speakers, and (5) a visit to the target country with a group of students. A list of addresses of sources of French, Spanish, and German cultural materials and a 10-item selected bibliography of pertinent publications conclude the article. (AF)

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LANGUAGE AND CULTURE: TWO FOR THE SEE-SAW

(A summary of a talk given at the Fifth Southern Conference on
Language Teaching, Atlanta, Georgia, February 13-15, 1969.)

By: Professor Jacqueline Elliott
Director of Language Education
The University of Tennessee

Much too often, in our American schools and colleges, the two following
extreme positions are found:

On the one hand, a basic course, taught audio-lingually, emphasizing
the development of hearing, understanding, speaking, reading, and writing in
this decreasing order, leaving the cultural elements almost completely out of
the curriculum. Some have defended this approach by asserting that by the
absorbing of minimal structural essentials the student is disciplined to a way of
thinking, that is to say, part of a culture.

On the other hand, higher level courses often titled, Culture and/or
Civilization, taught most of the time in English, are oriented to give the student
an overview of all the components of a people's culture in one or two terms or
semesters.

Now, suppose that we halt a moment and set each one of these approaches
at opposite ends of a see-saw. We can easily imagine that the end of the see-saw
where the language skills are placed will stay down for a long period of time, due
to their weight, to the point that the other end of the see-saw is high in the air
and unreachable. Then, suddenly, an overweight of culture is placed at the other

end which brings it down to earth and sends the language skills end up too high making it unattainable. In trying to restore the equilibrium, one could weight down each extremity successively at more frequent intervals, but as you can guess, that is just playing see-saw. Now let's stop the game and re-establish a balance by dosing language and culture evenly and simultaneously, keeping the see-saw still at a horizontal level.

Serious questions then come to the mind: Can the study of language be independent from the study of culture? Or, in other words, can a language be learned independently from its cultural content? Or can the study of culture be complete without relating it to the study of the language of the socio-cultural group whose language is being considered? Let's first answer the most basic question: What is culture?

Nelson Brooks and Howard Nostrand, who have spent years in such study, briefly summarize it thus: It is the aspects of the people's way of life. For the cultural anthropologists culture is the ensemble of traditions, uses, habits, beliefs, and values, which mold the attitudes and the conduct of a people in diverse circumstances. Edouard Herriot, a French politician and writer said: "La culture c'est ce qu'il reste quand on a tout oublié."

A goal which is common to both language and culture is the achievement of cross-cultural understanding and communication--a goal also achieved in social studies and language art curricula. The relationship between language and culture is a very close one, and raises some interesting questions. Is language shaped by culture? Or is culture molded by language? Actually,

language is part of the framework of the culture, and therefore the teaching of culture can be considered an intrinsic part of the teaching of a foreign language. For example, we know that the socio cultural environment determines the language of a person. The Spaniard saying "haiga" instead of "haya" is certainly not a member of a highly educated group. Similarly, the Frenchman saying, "il faut que j'y alle," instead of, "il faut que j'y aille," is immediately labeled as coming from a provincial background. We could illustrate ad infinitum the tight bonds between language and culture. Since they are so intimately related how can one possibly be taught without reference to the other? This integration of culture must occur at each stage of the teaching of the language.

The next step to be considered is that of choosing from among the wealth of culture patterns which constitute the expression of a people; what and in which way shall we impart this knowledge at the different levels of language teaching. Professor Howard L. Nostrand, in his research work, Background Data for the Teaching of French, a project undertaken under the auspices of the U. S. O. E. has computed and organized more than 700 pages of cultural documentation on French culture--an invaluable source of learning materials for teachers. One of the chapters most pertinent to this morning's topic (clinic) is the one entitled, The Foreign Culture in a Model Foreign Language Sequence. (Part A, Vol. 1, page 42) This material is available to teachers through interlibrary loan.

Activities taking place at FLES level, if judiciously related to language teaching, will induce in the children the cultural patterns of the people whose language they are learning.

Three examples, taken at random from basic activities intimately and automatically integrated into language learning will show how the teaching of culture can be easily incorporated into the teaching of language:

1. Teaching songs. I suggest that a high priority of choice be given to the songs heard in the foreign country playgrounds or homes, sung by the children or students of the same age, for their songs which are a part of their cultural environment can become also part of our American children's background, thus bringing closer the two cultural areas.

2. Teaching greetings. Nothing is more simple than to teach "bonjour monsieur, madame, mademoiselle, messieurs-dames" exactly as they are used in France when greeting people in the street, in the store, in the public garden, etc. , with the correct intonation and gestures accompanying the greetings. The cultural concept of greeting will smoothly become part of the American children manners. We can then hope that the days will vanish when Americans greet the French with the lonely, dry "bonjour" deprived of its companion and its tonality which always invites the French listener to respond "Bonjour mon chien".

3. Teaching Oral Comprehension or Reading. On second or third levels of language teaching, cultural explanations may be given extemporaneously when semantic difficulties arise. They are often enclosed by a cultural frame which necessitates attention. For example: Chez Une Amie

---Madeleine, voudrais-tu du pain grillé ce matin avec ton café?

---Non, merci madame.

---C'est pourtant plus léger pour l'estomac.

---Alors si vous insistez et que ce ne soit pas trop long à préparer,
j'en prendrais bien un morceau.

Such a passage demands that "Pain Grillé" be explained. It is not a toast, but a slice of French Bread browned under the broiler. Also the notion of "petit déjeuner" deserves an explanation which points out mainly that for most French people it is a "hurry meal" and that going to the trouble of toasting the bread shows that the hostess cares for and is doing something special for Madeleine. The first refusal of Madeleine is also to be noted, for in France one does not accept the first time one is offered something. The hostess will always insist anyway.

In 1956 the Northeast Conference on Language Teaching suggested several ways of implementing the cultural objective. I would like to emphasize five of them:

1. Use authentic material as much as possible, (films, filmstrips, records, tapes, newspapers, etc. ,) and point out similarities, and differences between the two cultures. Bring in a third cultural concept to assure understanding.
2. Discuss at length certain key themes or culturally significant words. (See example 3 above.)
3. Study the angle from which the target language people see us. A typical example of reader illustrating this point of view is L'Amérique d'Aujourd'hui vue par les Français, Carduner and Carduner, Prentice-Hall, Inc. , Englewood

Cliffs, New Jersey, 1968.

4. When guest speakers are invited make sure that the students have many pertinent questions to ask. Nelson Brooks suggests a very thorough list of topics for informal study in his book, Language and Language Learning, Theory and Practice, Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc. , 1960, pp. 87-92.

5. Make every possible effort to visit the target country and take a small group of students with you.

To summarize, let's reiterate that there is a place for culture in the foreign language curriculum, and the teaching of culture, because of the close relationship between culture and language, should be interwoven with the teaching of language skills at all levels of teaching. This is a problem-filled situation, but the problems are not insurmountable and the importance of the cultural objective outweighs the difficulties encountered in achieving it. As language teachers we can adopt a somewhat "pluralistic method" which will allow us to present and analyze any cultural material at a time when it correlates with the language taught. Perhaps it will lack regularity, consistency and continuity but in a long run, the quantity of material covered and its relationship with the language taught will make the language learning experience more enjoyable, more enriching for the students.

In order to support my concept of language and culture as compatible inseparable friends who live in harmonious togetherness without playing at rocking the see-saw, without trying to outweigh each other, I would like to

finish by quoting Wilmarth H. Starr (Modern Foreign Languages and the Academically Talented, Washington, NEA, 1960, p. 19).

"Mastery of the skill must be accompanied by familiarity with the culture the language represents, as well as a larger view of life resulting from the realization that there are many cultures and value systems, some far different from our own, operative in the world today."

Useful addresses to receive cultural material from different countries:

- | | |
|------------|---|
| 1. French | FACSEA
972 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10021 |
| 2. Spanish | Cultural Services
Embassy of Spain
1477 Girard Street, N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20009 |
| 3. German | Deutsche Welle
Public Relations Department
P. O. B. 344, Cologne
Federal Republic of Germany |

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